



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 40002 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0002 • (360) 753-6780 • www.governor.wa.gov

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To the Honorable Speaker and Members,
The House of Representatives of the State of Washington

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning, without my approval as to Section 2, Substitute House Bill No. 1606 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to fairness in the informal dispute resolution process."

Section 2 of this bill would create new statutory language regarding the state's nursing home informal dispute resolution process. The Department of Social and Health Services currently offers an informal dispute resolution process for all licensed nursing homes that is in compliance with federal regulations for Medicaid and Medicare-certified nursing homes. Section 2 of the bill would require modification of the current informal dispute resolution process to allow nursing home residents or their representatives to provide input. Nursing home residents currently have extensive input during the complaint investigations and licensing and certification surveys. The presence of residents or their representatives during informal dispute resolution sessions might have a chilling effect upon candid discussions regarding resident care issues and might limit the effectiveness of this tool for addressing resident care concerns quickly and less contentiously. The enacted 2005-2007 state operating budget does not include additional funding or staff to implement this program.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Section 2 of Substitute House Bill No. 1606.

With the exception of Section 2, Substitute House Bill No. 1606 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine O. Gregoire
Governor